



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

March 17, 2014

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North Dakota Observes Poison Prevention Week

State Health Department Urges North Dakotans to Prevent Unintentional Poisonings

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Poison Prevention Week March 16 through 22, 2014, the North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging North Dakotans to take measures to avoid unintentional poisonings.

A poison is any product or substance that can harm someone if it is used in the wrong way, by the wrong person, or in the wrong amount. Potentially poisonous items could include some household products, chemicals, drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, illegal or animal medicines), snake bites, spider bites and scorpion stings. Poisons can enter the body through the eyes and/or ears, on or through the skin, by breathing them or by swallowing.

More than 2 million poisonings are reported each year to the Nation's poison centers. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, approximately 90 percent of poisonings happen at home, and 51 percent of poisonings involve children under the age of 6. The majority of fatal poisonings occur among adults, especially older adults.

In 2013, there were 5,300 exposure calls made to the National Poison Helpline. Of those 5,300 calls, 54 percent were for children younger than age 6, who had a misadventure serious enough for someone to call for help. Poison Prevention Week is an opportunity to remind parents, grandparents, caregivers and the public about the dangers of poisoning and to provide some basic prevention strategies avoid children from a serious episode.

"Most poisonings are preventable," said Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health. "I encourage all adults to take preventive measures to protect children and themselves from unintentional poisonings. Many of the most dangerous poisons are things found in a home such as antifreeze and window washer products, some medicines, corrosive cleaners like drain openers or toilet bowl cleaners, fuels like kerosene and lamp oil, or pesticides."

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The Department of Health recommends the following poison-prevention measures:

- Keep all medicines, household chemicals and other poisonous substances away from children and away from food. Never leave them on the bedside stand, kitchen table or bathroom counter. Lock them up if possible. This is applicable for visitors as well.
- Warn children never to put medicines, chemicals, plants or berries in their mouths unless an adult says it's O.K. At an early age, teach children that some pretty things, like vitamins and aspirin, can hurt them. Never call medicine "candy" to get a child to take it.
- Never store poison in food or beverage containers.
- Read all labels. Follow the instructions and measure carefully. Open and take medicines only when the lights are on. Only take medicines prescribed for you.
- Put all unused medications in a sturdy, securely sealed container and then in the trash can where children and pets can't reach them. You also can dispose of them through the North Dakota Attorney's General's Take Back Program. To find out more about the program visit: <http://www.ag.nd.gov/BCI/PrescriptionDrugAbuse.htm>
- Do not carry medicine in your purse or diaper bags; children like to play with them.
- Do not put decorative lamps and candles that contain lamp oil where children can reach them because lamp oil is very toxic.
- Keep windows and/or doors open or run fans when using strong cleaning products. Never mix cleaning products together.
- Have the national poison control phone number with other emergency contacts available. Telephone stickers and magnets with the phone number are available from the North Dakota Department of Health

In case of a poisoning or a questionable episode, people should do the following:

- Call 9-1-1 if the person is unconscious, having difficulty breathing or not breathing.
- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink. Call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222 immediately.
- Bring the product or bottle to the phone so you can read the label to the staff at the Poison Control Center. Explain what was taken, how much was taken, when it was taken, and the age and weight of the person.
- Do not give syrup of ipecac or activated charcoal unless told to do so by the Poison Control Center or your physician.

For more information about poison prevention or to request stickers and magnets with the national poison control number, contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1) or visit our website at www.ndpoison.org.

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